Electronic Version
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Claims

[c1] A method for using a network of set-top boxes, comprising:
connecting at least a first and a second set-top box in a network;
making one or more resources in each of said first and second set-top boxes available to said network;
receiving a command in said first set-top box which requires some or all of said resources; and
using said resources in said first or said second set-top box.

[c2] The method of claim 1 wherein said resources include tuners or storage devices.

[c3] The method of claim 2 wherein said first set-top box uses said resources in said first set-top box if available, and attempts to use said resources in said second set-top box if not available.

[c4] The method of claim 2 wherein said first set-top box determines whether a first storage device of said storage devices in said first set-top box or a second storage device of said storage devices in said second set-top box

has more space available and uses one of said first or second storage devices that has more space available.

[c5] The method of claim 2 wherein said command is for scheduling a show.

[c6] The method of claim 2 wherein said command is for transferring a show to one of said storage devices.

[c7] The method of claim 5 further comprising:
determining a time slot for said show;
examining said resources to determine if a specific tuner of said tuners is available during said time slot; and
reserving said tuner for said show.

[c8] The method of claim 6 further comprising:
examining said resources to determine if a first storage device in said first set-top box has enough space available for said show;
transferring said show to said first storage device, if there is enough space available for said show;
examining said resources to determine if a second storage device of said storage devices in said second set-top has sufficient space available, if enough space was not available on said first storage device; and
transferring said show to said second storage device, if there is sufficient space available for said show on said

second storage device and not on said first storage device.

[c9] A network of set-top boxes, comprising:
at least a first and a second set-top box connected in a network;
one or more resources in each of said first and second set-top boxes; and
a command received by said first set-top box which requires one or more of said resources to be used, wherein said first set-top box uses said resources in said first set-top box or said second set-top box.

[c10] The network of claim 9 wherein said resources include tuners or storage devices.

[c11] The network of claim 10 wherein said first set-top box uses said resources in said first set-top box if available, and attempts to use said resources in said second set-top box if not available.

[c12] The network of claim 10 wherein said first set-top box determines whether a first storage device of said storage devices in said first set-top box or a second storage device of said storage devices in said second set-top box has more space available and uses one of said first or second storage devices that has more space available.

[c13] The network of claim 10 wherein said command is for scheduling a show.

[c14] The network of claim 10 wherein said command is for transferring a show to one of said storage devices.

[c15] The network of claim 13 further comprising:
a time slot for said show wherein said resources are examined to determine if a specific tuner is available during said time slot; and
a list for reserving said tuner for said show.

[c16] A network of set-top boxes, comprising:
means for connecting at least a first and a second set-top box in a network;
means for sharing one or more resources in each of said first and second set-top boxes; and
means for receiving a command by said first set-top box which requires one or more of said resources to be used; and
means for responding where said first set-top box uses said resources of said first or second set-top boxes.

[c17] A computer program product comprising:
a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for causing a computer to use a network of set-top boxes, compris-

ing,

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to connect at least a first and a second set-top box in a network;

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to make one or more resources in each of said first and second set-top boxes available to said network;

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to receive a command in said first set-top box which requires some or all of said resources; and

computer readable program code means for causing a computer to use said resources in said first or said second set-top box.

[c18] The computer program product of claim 17 wherein said resources include tuners or storage devices.

[c19] The computer program product of claim 18 wherein said first set-top box uses said resources in said first set-top box if available, and attempts to use said resources in said second set-top box if not available.

[c20] The computer program product of claim 18 wherein said first set-top box determines whether a first storage device of said storage devices in said first set-top box or a second storage device of said storage devices in said second set-top box has more space available and uses

one of said first or second storage devices that has more space available.

[c21] The computer program product of claim 18 wherein said command is for scheduling a show.

[c22] The computer program product of claim 18 wherein said command is for transferring a show to one of said storage devices.

[c23] The computer program product method of claim 21 further comprising:
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to determine a time slot for said show;
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to examine said resources to determine if a specific tuner is available during said time slot; and
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to reserve said tuner for said show.

[c24] The computer program product method of claim 22 further comprising:
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to examine said resources to determine if a first storage device in said first set-top box has enough space available for said show;
computer readable program code means for causing a

computer to transfer said show to said first storage device, if there is enough space available for said show;
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to examine said resources to determine if a second storage device in said second set-top has enough space available, if enough space was not available on said first storage device; and
computer readable program code means for causing a computer to transfer said show to said second storage device, if there is enough space available for said show on said second storage device and not on said first storage device.

[c25] A resource sharing system, comprising:
a set-top box;
means for connecting said set-top box to one or more resources, at least some of said resources being external to said set-top box; and
means for receiving user input by said set-top box which requires one or more of said resources to be used; and
means for using said resources in response.

[c26] A method for using a network of set-top boxes, comprising:
connecting at least a first and a second set-top box in a network;
making a foreground tuner and a background tuner in

each of said first and second set-top boxes available to said network;

receiving a command in said first set-top box which requires said foreground tuner or said background tuner in said second set-top box; and

using said foreground tuner or said background tuner in said second set-top box based on a priority rule.

[c27] The method of claim 26 wherein said priority rule comprises a background tuner taking precedence over a foreground tuner.